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ABSTRACT

The use of a practicum form of training for faculty advisers is discussed. Understanding the advising process may be viewed as a transaction between master adviser (advising mentor) and faculty adviser. Likewise, the understanding can be replicated in the interaction between faculty adviser and student advisee. Using the practicum setting to help advisers is a way to represent essential features of advising practice while enabling learners to experiment at low risk, vary the pace and focus of their work, and go back over things. The learner must be able to say what effects are desired. Joint experimentation can help learners set their own objectives. A behavioral change model proposed by R. H. Davis, 1979, identifies variables that influence changes in the instructional behavior of faculty. The model, which contains classes of organizational and individual variables, is used to critique the applicability of using a reflective practicum setting in the adviser-training program. A major organizational variable concerns role expectations of faculty. It is advocated that advisees be led by their advisers to view the advising process as one by which imperfect actions are modified through reflection-in-action, i.e., the process of judging what one's responses should, or could, be. (SW)

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PRACTICUM TRAINING FOR ADVISORS

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Practicum Training for Advisors

This paper describes how advisors may be aided in their understanding of advising and the advising process. According to my dated copy of Webster's a process is a series of operations in the production of something or a series of actions, changes, or functions that bring about an end result. Applied to advising, when one adopts the role of advisor what is helpful to know about the process of advising? How might we go about helping faculty advisors become more comprehensive and creative in both their understanding and their practice of advising ? Similarly, how might advisors become more effective in enacting that role in their work with students?

Advising seeks to help students frame and understand questions in particular contexts. In advising sessions, advisees are aided in exploring and evaluating options and reaching decisions regarding choices of action or belief. Answers that are formulated become both information to be used and hypotheses to be considered. At issue in this discussion is what assistance is useful to advisors to improve their understanding of and competence in advising. This paper explores how a practicum form of advisor training may be used to benefit advisors.

Understanding Complex Behavior

How do accomplished professionals establish and monitor the foundation of their professional competencies? All of us use forms of non-logical processes which include the skillful

judgments, decisions, and actions we undertake spontaneously without our being able to describe the process we follow. Schon (1) uses the term "knowing-in-action" to refer to the parts of knowledge we reveal in our action. We reveal this knowledge in our spontaneous, skillful execution of some performance, but we characteristically are unable to describe the process clearly.

Our descriptions of our performance are usually after-the-fact representations of what we thought we did. Usually, however, we can execute smooth sequences of activity, we speak to groups, lecture in class, advise students, and other complex activities, without having to think about what we do as we do it. A spontaneous knowing-in-action helps us make the approximations, judgments, decisions, and adjustments necessary to carry out the task successfully. We may deliberate on our action after the fact, to better enable us to understand our action, but our contemplation has no direct connection to our action as it takes place.

A consequence parallel to our stream of action is "reflection-in-action." According to Schon, an unfamiliar or unexpected outcome leads us to review our behavior to account for this surprise. This reflection seeks to help us discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to this unexpected outcome. Reflection-in-action has a crucial function which is to question the assumptions that make up our knowing-in-action behavior. Most of us engage in scanning our social environment to determine the effects of our actions. Whether in a classroom seminar, a committee meeting, or a

dinner party, we "scan" the group and our behavior to better enable us to "read" what our impact is or has been. When we are surprized by some turn of events in that setting we engage in reflection-in-action to judge what our response should, or could, be. The results frequently permit us to make adjustments of our perceptions of, or our performance in, that particular environment.

These two processes, knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action, are part of the makeup of the world and work of practice in a profession. Schon views professionals as those who share a common body of explicit professional knowledge, as well as values, preferences, and norms that help them make sense of practice situations, formulate goals and objectives for professional action, and determine what constitutes acceptable professional conduct.(p33)

If we view advising as a form of professional activity we might ask how does one learn to be a competent advisor? Probably, much of what we know of advising, or what we think we know, stems from: (a) what the institution expects of advisors (as far as advisor knows this), (b) what the advisor thinks the advisee needs to know (from a prior mental analysis by the advisor), (c) what advisees say they want, and (d) the advisor's experience as, once, an advisee. We advise, in part, as we were once advised ourselves.

Secondly, one may anticipate that some part of our professional competence as advisors comes from the application of theories and techniques derived from somewhat systematic

inquiry of problems specific to advising practice. For example, procedures or techniques that facilitate the advisor's efforts to have advisees share, explore, and evaluate their educational history may be found in various counseling, teaching, and training methodologies. These approaches are learned as a by-product of the advisor's experience in advising or as part of an advisor's orientation or training in the advising program. If the advisor is a faculty member, however, it is highly unlikely s/he will take time to thoroughly explore the field of advising literature as one would/has explored one's own area of expertise. Therefore, a fruitful, efficient way to gain knowledge, involvement, and to hear various views about advising is to engage in an advising seminar/practicum.

There are also unfamiliar situations in one's professional work where the problem is not initially clear and there is no obvious fit between the characteristics of the situation and the available body of theories and techniques. Like teaching, much of what occurs in advising fits this description. In cases where available knowledge doesn't fit the problem context a professional's training has to prepare one to think-one's-way through to satisfactory resolutions. A competent practitioner is seen as following rules for data gathering, inference, and hypothesis testing that allows one to make clear connections between presenting situations and the body of professional knowledge applicable to the scenario. This activity on the part of professionals is analogous to what Schon has referred to as reflection-in-action. Beyond these situations, according to

Schon, familiar rules, theories, and techniques are put to work in concrete instances through the intermediary of an art that consists of a form of reflection-in-action. Furthermore, one could recognize cases of problematic situations in which practitioners not only follow rules of inquiry but also sometimes respond to surprising elements of the situation by inventing new rules. This kind of reflection-in-action is central to the artistry with which practitioners sometimes make new sense of uncertain, unique, or conflicted situations. In such cases, the practitioner is led to rethink the knowing-in-action in ways that go beyond available rules, facts, theories and operations. Practitioners may have to learn reflection-in-action that goes beyond past practice--not only by devising new methods of reasoning but by constructing and testing new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems.

Applying relevant professional skills is the core of much of advising. Advisees bring new histories, expectations, problems, questions and patterns of personal resources as they enter the advising process. As the reader is well aware, the same advisee at different times in the academic year seems, and perhaps is, a different person. When different persons and different times interact the result may, indeed, or should, present a succession of intricate challenges for the advisor to contemplate. How best may we prepare advisors to meet these challenges? Schon has explored the practicums found in the clinics, workshops, and internships of professional schools, notably architecture,

music, psychoanalysis, and counseling and consulting. A practicum is a setting designed for the task of learning a practice. These practicums are reflective in that they aim to help students become professional by learning to become more proficient at a kind of reflection-in-action. (p40) They are reflective in that they depend on a reciprocally reflective dialogue of teacher and student. This paper seeks to explore how this understanding of the making of a professional may be applied to understanding and improving the process of advising.

Teaching The Advising Process

This heading is misleading because advising, whether from the perspective of the advisor or advisee, cannot be "taught" in the technical rational sense of communicating all the rules and facts that govern practice. Even competent advisors cannot say what advising is, because they, like Schon's architectural designers, have a limited ability to say what they know, because some essential features of advising transcend clearly statable rules. As suggested by Schon, the teacher, a senior practitioner, mainly functions as a coach whose main activities are demonstrating, advising, questioning, and criticizing. (p.38)

Our need to show "we know," however, is strong. Witness the"what's your answer?" "here's how you should do this?' or, "I think my answer's best" statements that are omnipresent in many learning situations. According to Schon, instructions to those trying to learn a complex task are always and inevitably incomplete. (p103) The giver of instructions must reflect on

the thing one knows how to do, trying to make explicit the procedures that are followed more or less spontaneously, and then try to anticipate and clarify the ambiguities the listener may discover in the description. In advising, learning how to support a person's description of the problem to be explored, with accompanying options for consideration, is more difficult than the words imply. When persons attempt to enact an instruction to that end, they reveal the meanings they have constructed for it, indicating how they may have filled a gap of specificity, ambiguity, or strangeness. According to Schon, every attempt to act on an instruction reveals and tests the learner's understanding of its meaning and, at the same time, the quality of the instruction itself. (p104) The often noted reluctance of people to volunteer for role play or other on-the-spot performance activities reveal the power of the "can I do it right? " mentality implicit in performance-based opportunities.

Schon describes and analyzes the practicum training of therapists in training. Lessons drawn from this training of a certain kind of professional acumen may have applications for our discussion of the advising process. The therapy training supervisor aims to provide the fledging therapist assistance in examining the trainee's own mental processes as they apply to actions in therapy practicums and assistance in reframing the practicum patient's problem and the trainee's role. The supervisor helps student trainees see how they bring to the supervision session attitudes, feelings, and assumptions that

shape their interaction with their patients.(p251) In like manner, the advising coach/mentor plays a role in helping advisors understand that the expectations, behaviors, and attitudes that surface in advisor-training sessions also shape the interactions that advisors have with their student advisees.

A comparison between roles of teaching, coaching, and advising may be useful. In teaching, the academician essentially is involved with learners where most of the learner's "performance" is practiced privately and internal to the person. The learner's performance is mastered outside the classroom and only sporadically demonstrated by tests and papers. In contrast, coaching involves a very public learning activity where learner performances are systematically repeated in the coach's presence. In advising, the advisor's task is to help the advisees make public what formerly s/he had only held privately. Furthermore, the now public presentation is subject to review and scrutiny by both advisor and advisee. In this case, the process of advising involves helping the advisee develop and demonstrate usable skills in problem identification, exploration, and resolution.

In advising, the coach, whether a senior advising mentor working with advisors, or the advisor working with advisees, can help learners discover how they have framed their role or their problem in practice by how they recreate the role or problem in advisor training or the advising session. This assistance helps the learner, either advisor or advisee, to use this awareness to attempt a new way of framing the role or problem. For example,

the advisor who framed a student's problem of low achievement as a matter of low ability, may reframe it as a hypothesis of poor organizational or study skills. Similarly, advisees who have framed their problem as lack of interest in a particular course may test the hypothesis that a lack of understanding of course material basic to the course is associated with the student's withdrawal from involvement in the course.

By doing to the learner as the learner might do to another, the mentor/coach helps the learner (read advisor) observe the kinds of activities that might be carried out by the advisor with advisees. Furthermore, the advisor also has the opportunity to experience how it feels to be on the receiving end of that kind of action. In Schon's words, "my earlier action becomes visible to me in your present action toward me; and my client's (advisee's) earlier experience becomes accessible to me in my present experience of interaction with you. I observe in your present action how I might act with my client (advisee), and I experience now what he or she might later experience with me." (p254) Thus, the advisor may gain a better understanding of how student advisees feel when the advisor acts in that manner with them. These forms of frame reflection make use of inner and outer views of action, what Schon calls action as felt and action as observed. They do these things retrospectively, in relation to events that have happened in the advising process and, prospectively, in relation to those events that may happen in the future of the advising process. Consequently, the complexity of the learning/training

process for advisors must match the complexity of the behavior to be changed.

When we take a role we "enact" it. We make it come alive by publicly engaging in the thoughts and actions (we believe) appropriate to it. We interpret reality through the lens of the role as we know it and give coherence to our understanding by placing bounds on our own potential and rejecting fantasies of omnipotence. The practicum training program is designed to aid advisors in sorting out the various definitions of the primary task involved in advising. According to Lawrence, (2) there are three definitions of a primary task. The first is the normative primary task. Applied to advising, this definition is the task that people in the organization think advising ought to be, usually according to the precepts supplied by some superordinate authority in the organization. The second is the existential primary task. In advising, this definition consists of what advisors believe they are doing when they advise. The third definition is the phenomenal primary task. This consists of what may be hypothesised that advisors are actually engaged in when advising and, furthermore, of which they may not be consciously aware. Gaps, or discontinuities, between these three aspects can significantly undercut the performance of a role. Therefore, the opportunity to review our advising "behavior" provided by the practicum can help reveal the differences between what we espouse, and what we do, as advisors.

We propose that understanding the advising activity or process may be viewed as a transaction between master advisor

(read advising mentor) and faculty advisor. In like manner, the understanding can be said to occur or be replicated in the interaction between faculty advisor and student advisee. The question becomes, then, how does one go about helping another learn from, or about, the process or activity of advising? If we are successful in helping advisors learn more about "enacting" the advising role, and and if advisors are, in turn, more successful in helping student advisees understand what advising can be, then, perhaps, gaps between the normative, existential, and phenomenal primary tasks in advising are decreased. That is, what advising should be, what we think it is we do when we advise, and what, in fact, we are doing in advising may more nearly be the same phenomena.

Difficulties of the Learning Process

In learning about advising, the contradiction inherent in learning about self in the context of advising places the learner in a predicament. The learner, wishing to view self as a competent person, is expected to plunge into advising, trying to do from the very outset what one does not know how to do well in order to become more proficient and gain the experience that will increase one's competence. Advising, in part, is self-discovery where the self, or at least the image of self, is placed at risk. The learner must become dependent on the coach-instructor-mentor and look to him/her for help in acquiring understanding, direction, and competence.

The threat to one's sense of competence is strong. The advisor comes to advisor training, the advisee to the advising

session, both desiring to perform adequately, to uphold the perception of themselves as competent persons. Yet, in the session, confusion and mystery reign, and the meanings held by the coach-instructor on one hand and by the learner on the other, tend to be incongruent. As Schon suggests, the coach's language refers to things and relations in a particular kind of world--familiar to the coach, strange as yet to the student. (p219) Each participant must construct the meaning of the other's messages and must design messages whose meanings the other can decipher.

For the advisor who is a faculty member, the process can be particularly trying. Trained and certified as a legimate expert in one's field, viewed by many as a "educated" or "learned" person, the professor is frequently perceived by students as "all knowing." Still, for the advisor, the apprehension about the personal dimensions of advising, the reluctance to place oneself in compromising situations, the avoiding of personal disclosure regarding one's advising practices, indicate a faculty member's ambivalence about one's competence as an advisor. Procedures that aim to make one's advising limitations explicit, therefore, are particularly threatening.

The faculty member's attitude toward the relevance of advising is also a contributing factor. Research indicates that the broad diversity of classroom climates and faculty teaching procedures appears to be related to variations in the personality characteristics of faculty members in different academic disciplines. (3) Consequently, the academician's view

of undergraduate teaching as an important contribution to (a) the character development, (b) intellectual development, or (c) vocational development of their students varies according to the professor's academic discipline. For instance, one anticipates social science or humanities faculty to be more inclined to view advising as an appropriate means of fostering a student's personal development than faculty from the sciences. This suggests that advisor training programs need the flexibility to provide learning opportunities that respond directly to the teaching orientations and personal dispositions of faculty members from different disciplines.

We have argued elsewhere that senior faculty may appropriately serve as "peer" advisors for their junior colleagues. (4) In our discussion here the relevant criterion may not so much be seniority but rather competence in understanding, and in helping others understand, the process of advising. Coming from different disciplines, faculty have different ways of framing a situation, they tend to pay attention to different sets of facts, view the same data from different perspectives, or make judgments of effectiveness based on different kinds of criteria. According to Schon, representatives from different professions must try to get inside each other's points of view. They must try to discover what models and appreciative systems lead each of them to focus preferentially on a set of facts or criteria, make their tacit cognitive strategies explicit to themselves, and find out how each one understands the other's framing of the situation.

(p218) For the faculty advisor, helping another advisor who represents another discipline, much like advising a student from a department or school different from one's own, requires a special appreciation of how the "frames of reference" of the participants contribute to their congruence of understanding or lack of it.

Implications for the Institution

It seems appropriate in this discussion to also engage in some form of reflection-in-action. In so doing, we are able to rethink some part of our knowing-in-action that created the first portion of the paper. We can test our tentative understanding of what we think we're doing and either affirm our production or attempt to change our "knowledge-in-action" and fashion a different and, one hopes, better product.

Using a practicum setting to help advisors learn about the advising process is a significant endeavor. It seeks to represent essential features of advising practice to be learned while enabling learners to experiment at low risk, vary the pace and focus of their work, and to go back over things when it seems useful to do so. According to Schon, there must be a way of breaking the larger task to be mastered into meaningful instrumental problems (p213). The learner must be able to say what effects s/he would like to produce--must know what s/he wants. And finally, the coach-instructor must be willing to keep instructional goals within the bounds of the model. Joint experimentation can be used to help the learners set their own objectives. This requires learners, however, to risk declaring

what effects they want to produce and risk experimenting with an unfamiliar kind of experimentation.

How realistic is it to think that educational institutions will promote an intricate and involved process for faculty to learn more about the advising process? Moreover, how likely is it that faculty would consider availing themselves of such an educational program were it available? Generally, those in higher education have a traditional view of knowledge as privileged information or expertise. They view teaching as transfer of information; learning as receiving, storing, and digesting information. According to Schon "knowing that" tends to take priority over "knowing how"; and know-how, when it does appear, takes the form of science-based technique or procedure. (p309) The fostering of individual exploration and definition of issues, with attention to the particular potential for growth in performance competency can also be a goal for advisors.

Davis (5) suggests a behavioral change model which identifies variables that influence changes in the instructional behavior of faculty. The model, containing classes of organizational variables as well as individual variables, may help us critique the applicability of using a reflective practicum setting in the advisor-training program. A major organizational variable mentioned by Davis concerns the role expectations of faculty. In order for the advisor training program to have a realistic chance of success, that is, to involve faculty in sincere efforts to improve advising competence, the expectations of the faculty role would have to

reflect the value of that objective. If, in fact, advising competence is not "valued" in the organization then the program is bound to be relegated to a form of cosmetic intervention that results in little substantive change in organization process, or product, as it relates to advising.

Another organizational variable consists of the motivators present in the organization that reinforce the importance of increased competence by faculty as advisors. The organization's attention to motivators, both the intrinsic incentives that faculty derive from competent advising performance and the extrinsic incentives that the organization provides for such behavior, is important. A person's belief that s/he is likely to be successful in an endeavor does not necessarily lead to continued involvement unless the person is motivated to use the skills there required. Even if faculty were to perceive they could benefit from the advising training program they would still have to experience some form of motivation to do so. Consequently, organizational expectations about the importance of advising may trigger changes in the stimuli that arouse the motivator variables. Furthermore, the scope of the training provided for advisors can also signal the complexity of the task to be mastered.

The final organizational variable mentioned by Davis is that of organization resources. The chief resource required is faculty and staff time and, thus, in some sense, money. The program requires both advising coordinator and faculty advisors to commit substantial time to the training process. It is

difficult in a college setting to achieve focused, long-term continuity of attention and commitment to work on institutional problems. But there is ferment fueled by changing perceptions of the demands of advising and rising doubts about the effectiveness of traditional modes of preparing faculty to undertake that activity. Perhaps these forces are sufficient to influence the allocation of resources in new and innovative ways since time and resources allotted to training underscore the importance of the activity to the organization.

The fact that one has learned of available opportunities to improve one's skills does not in any way guarantee that this knowledge will manifest itself in a change in behavior. The Davis model contains an individual variable concerning the expectations of the professor contemplating involvement in a new program. Presumably that professor poses two different kinds of questions. First, "If I go ahead, what is the probability that I will succeed?" This assessment influences one's decision to go ahead with the innovation or decide against it. Second, the faculty member asks, "If I am successful in the program, what are the likely outcomes?" In most cases, there are assumed to be many possible consequences of innovating, some of which may be negative, and each of which has a valence associated with it. Succinctly put, the question is, "What's in it for me?" We might ask what examples are there of conceptualizations of having one's cake and also eating it, that is, of maintaining the positive effects of self-interest while enhancing an other-directed or altruism-like quality into the self-interested

person's behavior. Every person feels the countering tugs of the principles of self-interest and personal responsibility and every profession and occupation is marked by the same tension.(6) The advising practicum program may be viewed as an economical way to receive a compact, useful, orientation to advising. Furthermore, improved advising knowledge may contribute directly to one's base of self-interest in the organization. One may conclude that the personal responsibility aspect of improving one's competence in advising may, in fact, be a distinctly effective manner in which to pursue one's self-interest. Attribution theorists (7, 8), for instance, suggest one's interest is a product of retrospective judgments of the causes of one's performance. Consequently, advisors' conscious recognition of the fact that they spend a great deal of time interacting with students, both in and outside of the advising framework, may lead them to infer that such interaction must be important not only for students but for themselves as well.

The program to improve advising competence aims to influence the self-regulatory or meta-cognitive capabilities present in mature learners. According to Brown, (9) these abilities include knowing what one knows and does not know, predicting the outcome of one's performance, planning ahead, efficiently apportioning time and cognitive resources, and monitoring and editing one's efforts to solve a problem or to learn. As colleges stress the quality of life available to enrollees, advising services will likely gain in importance. Institutional

representatives must be cognizant of the negative impact that advisors have on people under pressure or stress, a category that surely describes many college students, and how well-intentioned support attempts may fail because they are excessive, untimely, or inappropriate. The practicum-like training for advisors to further their understanding of the advising process may be considered, and explored, as a step in the direction of helping advisors and, consequently, students, understand and influence their own education.

Epilogue

If we assume for the moment that the practicum programs for advisors work satisfactorily, what will have been gained? We hope that advisees would be led by their advisors to view the advising process as one in which imperfect actions are continually modified through reflection-in-action. They would also learn that in everyday problem solving, it is often harder to figure out just what the problem is than to figure out how to solve it. In addition, they may learn that everyday problems are ill-structured and can be complicated, messy, and stubbornly persistent. They may even find, as suggested by Sternberg, (10) that it is not usually clear just what information will be needed to solve a given problem, nor is it always clear where the requisite information can be found. They will also likely discover that solutions to everyday problems depend on and interact with the contexts in which the problems are presented. Finally, they will become aware that everyday problems generally

have no one right solution, and even the best criteria for what constitutes a best solution are often not clear.

As students develop competence, and confidence, in the advising process they will discontinue their reading of the advisor's inability to give them what they seek as a sign of the advisor's incompetence. Students may also be more comfortable when their advisors admit uncertainties, make clear that advisors, too, do not know what to do at times, and reveal the reasoning and feeling by which advisors sometimes grope their way to answers. Perhaps students will come to realize that questions the advisor can't answer are precisely those questions that advisees should seek answers to with the advisor's assistance and support.

Advisors, for their part as professionals, are normally granted attention automatically on the basis of assumed expertise and knowledge. We hope that as a result of participation in the advising practicum advisors will become more adept at providing attention-giving, rather than attention-getting, to their student clients in face-to-face advising interactions. In addition to being a commodity that can be purchased, for instance in the classroom via tuition payments, attention is a reward of authority and prestige in work. People approach most professionals for what they believe is valuable information, and not only pay generously for it, but give in return an uncommonly close form of attention.(11)

Learners, including faculty, are often unaware of what they already know and what they need to know. In addition, advising

"teachers" are equally unaware of the knowing-in-action that informs their own flawed or skillful performance. Both parties are susceptible to myths of learning that cloud their awareness of experience and confuse their attempts at self-description. One may anticipate that advisors, when they do their jobs well, function not only as practitioners but also as on-line researchers, each inquiring more or less consciously into one's own and the advisee's changing understandings. By doing so the advisor demonstrates a mode of inquiry that students can mirror by joining in a relective dialogue. And if we can foster that eventuality, perhaps the normative, the existential, and the phenomenal primary task in advising will be closer to being one and the same.

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